Commissioner Names EMC Coordinator

Commissioner Martinez recently appointed Michael Roluti, Manager of the Power Resources Office, to be Reclamation's Y2K embedded microchip (EMC) coordinator. Roluti will lead Reclamation's EMC efforts, working closely with regional EMC area office staff and the EMC Technical Advisory Group (TAG). He will also coordinate all EMC efforts with Interior and other agencies.

Reclamation's Y2K program, particularly the embedded microchip activities, is one of Commissioner Martinez's top priorities. Electric power has been ranked among the top national concerns in terms of potential system failures at the turn of the century. It is important that Reclamation's power generation facilities, as well as all vital water facilities, are not adversely affected by Y2K problems.

While Reclamation has been aggressively working for some time addressing Y2K concerns, there is still much to be done. Much of the effort has gone to alter databases and computer programs that cannot make the switch to the new millennium, but now a problem called "embedded chips" is gaining attention.

Embedded microchips are miniature circuit boards that control a myriad of electrical devices, such as fax machines, telephones, and elevators to any of the complex control systems that operate Reclamation's supply of water and power.

Some EMCs depend on dates to operate, while others do not. Date-dependent chips electronically use the date to perform a specific function based on a schedule. Microchips that do not recognize the year 2000 and interpret it to be 1900 will cause the equipment to malfunction or simply cease to operate.

Reclamation operates facilities in the 17 western states and five regions. Reclamation project facilities store 245 million acre-feet of water and deliver that water to about 10 million acres, or one-third of the West's irrigated acreage. This stored water also provides millions of gallons of water for municipal, rural, and industrial water needs.

Reclamation is the second largest producer of hydroelectric power in the U.S., with 59 powerplants, 194 generating units, and more than 14 million kilowatts of installed capacity. Y2K compliance of this equipment spans not only the operation of water and power facilities, but is of concern in many related Reclamation programs, including emergency management, dam safety, and security. Adequate and reliable compliant equipment is critical in preventing, identifying, detecting, notifying, and responding to potential emergency situations at our facilities.